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QUOTATIONS

THE WORK OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

THE meeting in New York this week of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and fifty other affiliated national scientific societies, is an event which ought to loom large in the minds of thoughtful people. Not only do the thousand papers and reports read at the various section meetings themselves represent a large part of recent scientific achievement, but the meeting and exchange of views between men occupied in different fields can not but stimulate and liberalize the great human effort to conquer the jungle of ignorance and prejudice that surrounds the little clearing of cultivated science. Yet despite the fact that the meeting this week gives due prominence to the chemical conditions of "preparedness," and other matters affecting our national prosperity, it does not seem likely that it will do much to shake the massive apathy toward the spread of science and scientific method which characterizes our educated classes. A large part of this apathy is due to the vague but widespread feeling that science no longer needs any champions, that since the days of Tyndal, Huxley and Youmans, it has

conquered and taken possession of all our educational institutions.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Compared with the provisions for scientific research in countries like France and Germany, ours are pitifully meager. The energy of our colleges and universities is primarily directed to increasing the number of students, buildings and degrees conferred. The professors are so loaded up with routine teaching and such an unconscionable amount of administrative work, that he who would engage in genuine scientific research must do so by stealth and at the expense of his health. Nor do we provide many incentives for that kind of work. The public reward and recognition extended to technologic promoters is out of all proportion to that extended to scientific achievement itself—witness the millions of people who have heard of Edison but not of Theobald Smith, or who think that Marconi invented wireless telegraphy. Probably thousands of Yale men have not heard of Willard Gibbs, one of the most creative minds in nineteenth-century science, whose work at New Haven was possible largely because he was a man of means and of good family. Perhaps the general cause of science might prosper more in this country if there were greater co-operation and less provincial isolation among the various groups of specialists. Thus the great meeting in New York this week is marked by the absence of all the social science associations, which meet in Columbus, Ohio. The separation between the social and the physical scientists can surely not be of any real advantage to either. At any rate the great outstanding and deplorable fact is that on the vital questions requiring their cooperation, *e. g.*, the effect of immigration or of the interbreeding of races we have multitudes of impassioned orations and sophomore essays, but nothing worthy of being called science. Thousands upon thousands of studies have been devoted by the historians to the German migrations of the fifth century. Can it be that recent events because we are in a position to know more about them are necessarily of lesser intrinsic importance?—*The New Republic*.